

## **Biografie**

### **Kodo**

#### Kodo

Forty years ago, a small group of young people in Japan yearned for a new way of life. Disappointed with the direction of modern Japanese society and eager to rediscover traditional roots and values, they left their busy urban cultures behind and traveled north to remote Sado Island, in the Sea of Japan. The choice of Sado could not have been more fitting, because for centuries the island had been an isle of banishment for politicians, artists, writers and others who found themselves at odds with the established culture of the times. The group also had a vision of creating a school where the traditional Japanese performing arts could be learned by a new generation.

They found a home in an abandoned schoolhouse by the sea and began to play the world's oldest instrument, the drum (taiko). Day and night, they expressed their hope and fears, joy and wonder upon the taiko, learning its voices and ancient wisdom. To build endurance, they woke before dawn and ran long distances through the bamboo forests and rice fields. Surrounded by Sado Island's rich performing arts traditions, they began to study other instruments as well—the shamisen, koto and shakuhachi. They explored dance, song, and stage-craft along with the taiko's limitless depth and range.

Soon, attracted by rumors of a new, creative lifestyle that drew inspiration from traditions and the natural world, others came to join them, bringing more ideas and energy. The group's numbers grew, years passed, and they practiced and trained both body and soul. In time, Sado Island's unique culture, its four powerful seasons and great natural beauty found expression in their art.

There was not only a primal fierceness and determination to their work, but a playful, child-like curiosity as well, a fundamental openness to the instrument's infinite potential. So they called themselves Kodo, which means "heartbeat" but also "children of the drum." They also discovered that hearing the sounds of the great drum (o-daiko), carved from a single, massive tree trunk, babies fell fast asleep in their mothers' arms, lulled by the great heartbeat sound. Kodo learned that the sound of taiko is felt in the body as much as heard.

Kodo exploded onto the world stage at the Berlin Festival in 1981 and have since delivered over 3,400 performances in more than 46 countries, from war-torn Croatia to

New York's Carnegie Hall. Through constant collaborations with musicians, dancers, singers and actors in many countries, Kodo relentlessly explores the limits of the taiko and the closely-related traditional Japanese performing arts. The group's many recordings are available worldwide.

#### Kodo Village

Shaped by Sado Island's rich traditions and by years of international touring, Kodo developed a unique style and repertoire. Yet despite the constant infusion of global influences, the group became even more fiercely dedicated to its home of Sado Island. In 1988, Kodo built their own Village not far from the original schoolhouse by the sea, with living, practice, recording and office spaces, farm land and carefully tended forests.

#### Kodo Cultural Foundation

The Kodo Cultural Foundation is committed to the cultural and environmental preservation of Sado Island, and oversees many ambitious projects. From the conservation of local habitat and the revitalization of rare craft traditions, to the renovation of Noh theaters throughout Sado Island, the highly collaborative Kodo Cultural Foundation supports many vital initiatives.

#### Kodo Apprentice Centre

Inspired by its recordings, lifestyle, and performance art, many young people wished to join Kodo and learn the taiko and associated disciplines. In response, Kodo established an Apprentice Centre in another renovated schoolhouse. The apprentice program serves as a kind of mini-university, fulfilling



part of Kodo's original vision. Open to all qualified applicants, the program offers intensive training in not only diverse traditional performing arts, but in many related disciplines that inspire and inform them. These include rice culture and vegetable farming, Noh/Kyogen, tea ceremony, cooking and cuisine, history, and calligraphy, among others. Graduates are selected on an individual basis to become junior performing members.

#### Sado Island Taiko Centre

In an effort to extend their educational programs to the general public, and to share the joy of taiko, Kodo helped design and construct a beautiful new Taiko Centre. Situated high on a hill overlooking the sea, Taiko Centre staff conduct workshops and seminars year-round for visi-tors of all ages.

#### Earth Furniture

Kodo cares deeply about the natural environment of its home, including Sado's lush forests. To create a model of how a local resource could be sustainably managed, Kodo designs and manufactures interior furnishings from native, renewable timber. Cured by the sea, built by hand, and designed by Kodo Board member and renowned designer, Makoto Shimazaki, it is sold under the name Earth Furniture.

#### Earth Celebration

Every August, artists and fans from around the world travel to Sado Island to attend three days of original music and cultural events during the now-famous Earth Celebration music festival, currently in its twenty-fourth year. Although guest artists change every year, taiko culture and the stunning natural surroundings of Sado Island are at the heart of every event.

#### One Earth Tour

When Kodo began touring the world three decades ago, the performers discovered that the sound of the taiko had a similar effect. Wherever people heard the taiko, there was an instant sense of community, of one-ness. So the name One Earth Tour was born, and carried by the sound of the taiko, it has traveled the world with its message of shared humanity, environ-mental awareness, and peace, ever since.

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Visit [www.kodo.or.jp](http://www.kodo.or.jp) for further information